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WASTE-BASKET OF WORDS.

THE following words I have noticed in connection with pension claims from the South. I cannot state their precise locality, but I think they may nearly all be set down to Kentucky and Tennessee:—

GRIFF. — A certain man is described as having a “griff complexion.” He belonged to a colored regiment, but the particular shade intended I am unable to say.

HIRELAND. — A renter or cropper.

JIN. — “I hired him to jin around my farm,” apparently to “chore” or do odd jobs. Compare “gin,” a trap, and the Western “traps” = miscellaneous belongings.

LONG SWEETNIN’. — Molasses, sugar being short sweetnin.’ (Ala.)

MOLLY-COTTON. — A rabbit. “Cotton-tail” is common at the West.

SKAMPED. — Grazed. “He was skamped by a ball.”

SKIRTS. — One who claims to be a doctor testifies that a certain man “had a misery about his skirts,” which appears to mean his sides. Misery is nearly universal for pain. — *H. E. Warner, Washington, D. C.*

FOLK-LORE SCRAP-BOOK.

SUPERSTITIONS OF THE PASSAMAQUODDIES. — A correspondent of the “Lewiston (Maine) Journal,” some time ago, in conversation with intelligent members of the Passamaquoddy tribe, obtained many of their beliefs and superstitions, his principal authority being their priest, Father O’Dowd, whom he quotes to the following effect:—

“The great bugbear of the Passamaquoddies is Kee-zeg-be-set, who is supposed to be a fiend or fire hobgoblin prowling around at all times and ready for any sort of mischief. They believe they see him in the night, sometimes in the form of a rabbit and again in the shape of a fish. An Indian whose conscience may smite him for wrong-doing sees a pair of red eyes staring at him as he tosses in his sleep. It is Kee-zeg-be-set. A drunken Indian beholds in his frenzy some weird shape, and cries out, ‘See Kee-zeg-be-set!’ The Indian mothers believe that this direful hobgoblin tries to entrap their children. As more civilized parents warn their children that if they disobey and go to some forbidden place ‘the booggers will get you,’ so the Indian mothers frighten their little ones with the name of ‘Kee-zeg-be-set.’ They drive him away with the sign of the cross. He is only one of the supernatural beings which they suppose to be hovering around them, intent on evil. ‘Aboo-dom-k’n’ is an evil sprite that is believed to live in the water, to cast evil spells upon Indians who may stroll along the shore, or even to seize or devour children who may be playing in the water. Aboo-dom-k’n is supposed to have a fish’s body and tail, with a woman’s head and hair,

and corresponds to our idea of a mermaid, if we have any. The 'Lam-peg-win-wuk' are sprites who live under the water, and sometimes dance in the waves. It is probable that these are really the phosphorescent gleams made by animalculæ in the sea. The Passamaquoddies believe that up in the Canadian forest there lives a frightful and monstrous old witch called 'Kee-wowk,' who eats human flesh and has a merry feast when she gets an Indian in her fatal hug. Many a red man's bones have been ground between her teeth, they think. When Kee-wowk is attacked by man, beast, or spirit, she tears up a tree by the roots and fights her opponent with the great trunk and branches. No St. George has yet been able to overcome this Indian dragon. 'Gee-bel-lowk' is otherwise known as 'the spirit of the night air.' Many Passamaquoddies gravely tell you that they have seen him, and that he is all legs and head, having no visible body. He is seen perching in the crotch of a tree, making ugly grins at whoever looks at him. No less often the Indians think they see the 'Wu-nag-mes-wook,' little fellows who live under the rocks. They are described as having long, narrow faces, and spending their nights making inscriptions on the rocks. An old Indian told me he had not only seen many of their carvings, but had even observed the Wu-nag-mes-wook at work chiselling them.

"The Passamaquoddies still cling to their old and poetic notion of the nature of thunder. They believe that the rumble of the thunder-storm and the flashes of the lightning are the demonstrations of thunder spirits who are playing ball and shooting their arrows in the heavens. There is a tradition that a Passamaquoddy Indian one day expressed a desire that he might become 'a thunder.' All at once his companions saw him mounting to the sky in the smoke of the camp-fire. He was taken up to the abode of the thunders, placed in a long box, and, by some mysterious process, invested with the properties and existence of a thunder spirit — or as Louis Mitchell puts it, he was 'thunderfied.' He lived for seven years among the thunders, played ball with them in the sky, shot his gleaming arrows with them at the bird they are always chasing toward the south, married a female thunder spirit, and pursued an active and contented life of thunder and lightning. Seven years after his translation a violent storm passed over the encampment of the Passamaquoddies; there was an unusual and frightful contention among the thunder spirits; the rumbles were more terrific than Passamaquoddy ear had ever heard; the air smelled of brimstone; the sky blazed with red and yellow flames; the clouds opened and great forks of fire shot out of them; the rain fell in sheets; peal answered peal; one tongue of lightning spat out fire to another. The affrighted Passamaquoddies, who never had beheld such a storm, believed that the legions of thunder spirits were waging their most awful war. They fell down and crossed themselves. In the midst of their alarm they saw a human form slide down into their camp on a beam of light. It was their old friend, who had made his escape from the pursuing thunders, shaken off his 'thunderfied' existence, and returned to them. He had changed somewhat, but all his old friends knew him. He lived with the tribe till he died. Several of the Indians tell this story, and say it happened when their fathers were children, but they well remember these old men's accounts of it. These thunder spirits are supposed to shoot

bolts down upon the earth. To find one of these bolts is considered the greatest of good luck.

"Peter Sabatis, one of the Pleasant Point tribe, has a piece of flint which he found imbedded in the earth near the roots of a spruce-tree at Spruce Harbor, that had been struck by lightning, which he and the most of his tribe believe to be a thunder bullet or 'bed-dag-k'chi-gou-san.' When the Indians find a tree that has been demolished by lightning they always dig among the roots for the thunder bullet."

HOUSEHOLD FALLACIES. — The "Christian Register" (Boston), June 20, 1889, contains an interesting article under this title, by Prof. J. Y. Bergen. In the course of his paper, the writer points out the force of superstition in controlling existing arrangements of the kitchen. The sunlight is still believed to put out the fire. Potatoes, beets, and string-beans are supposed to boil dry more rapidly than other substances. "In most households, the bread-maker and cake-maker, if interrogated upon the subject, would be found to follow a regular plan in stirring the dough, revolving the spoon always — either in the same direction with the hands of a watch, or the reverse, but not alternating the motion. In stirring cream into butter with a spoon or in churning with a rotary churn, still more importance is attached to keeping up the motion continuously in one direction. And most remarkable of all is the alleged fact that a boiled custard which has begun to curdle overmuch may be checked in its downward career by quickly lifting it from the fire and stirring it the opposite way from that in which it was being stirred when the mischief began."

"Whether, as Felix Oswald would imply in some of his most entertaining writings upon hygiene, the belief in the sanctity of dirt and its consequent remedial virtue is a monkish dogma bequeathed to us from the Middle Ages or earlier times, it is not easy to decide. At any rate, there is at times an abject reverence shown for filth as a cure for various ills. A soiled stocking bound about the neck, as a remedy for sore throat, is a good example of this kind of treatment. And, even among people who would be quite above resorting to such a filthy mode of dealing with disease as this, a belief only a little less nonsensical would be found. It is to the effect that soiled damp clothes are either positively healthful in their effect upon the wearer, or that they are, at least not harmful."

WEATHER AND SEASONS. — From a "First Contribution to the Folk-Lore of Philadelphia and its Vicinity," by Henry Phillips, Jr. ("Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society," 1888, pp. 159-170.)

(a.) *Celestial:*

1. If Candlemas day be bright and clear
There 'll be two winters in the year.
2. If it rains on Candlemas day the winter is over ; if clear it is but half done.
3. If Candlemas day is fair and bright,
Winter will take a rougher flight.